

PSC/IR 251: Authoritarian Politics

University of Rochester
Fall 2021
TR 11:05am-12:20pm
Classroom: Hutchison 473

Professor: Jack Paine
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Course overview. This course teaches students about politics in authoritarian regimes. We first analyze key themes in historical dictatorships (bureaucracy, parliamentary constraints on the executive, militaries and political rights throughout history). We then examine coercion in contemporary authoritarian regimes (coercive threats and power sharing, repression and the guardianship dilemma). Next, we cover common institutions in contemporary authoritarian regimes (parties, elections, succession rules) and authoritarian responses to modernization. We finish by discussing developments in authoritarian politics over the past decade (controlling the Internet, incumbent consolidation and democratic breakdown). Throughout, we consider examples from across world regions.

Grading

- Students will complete six essays assigned throughout the semester: four during specific weeks marked below, and two during the university-scheduled final exam bloc (which at present is TBD).
- The final grade for non-W students is the average of your *five highest essay grades*. That is, the five-highest grades are weighted at 20% each, and the lowest-scoring essay does not count. Students are encouraged to complete every essay, but there is no penalty for missing one. There is nothing special about the final exam, it simply includes the last two of the six essays.
- For W students, the W component is 25% of the grade, and the five-highest essays are 15% each (as for the non-W students, the lowest-scoring of the six essays does not count toward the grade). The final W paper is 12-15 pages, with instructions provided at the end of the syllabus. The due dates for a draft and for the final draft are listed below. The grade for the draft is essentially pass/not pass (it is mainly a chance to get feedback, although you must complete the assignment on time), with most of the grade coming from the final paper.
- Each of the six essays are a maximum of 1,000 words. The questions will be closely related to topics discussed in class and in the readings. Essays must demonstrate substantial use of the assigned readings to earn better than a C. You are encouraged to use your notes and to consult the readings when writing your essays, but you CANNOT discuss the essays with any classmates until you have handed them in. As with the essays during the semester, the two essays during the final exam period are open book, and are to be completed on a computer. For any student that needs a laptop from the university to complete the final

exam in class, please let the TA know as soon in advance as possible so that we can make accommodations.

- Students in the W section that do not complete the W paper will fail the course. Hopefully this is an irrelevant stipulation.

Role of the TA. The role of the TA is somewhat unique in this course because they will not teach a separate section. However, with a course of this size, they will be an invaluable resource. Think of them as the administrator for this course—your first line of defense for most email inquiries and other questions about the course. That does not mean you should never contact me, but for most questions, it is best to contact the TA first. They will also grade all the essays, albeit with input from me. I will, however, grade the W papers (both the draft and final version).

Reading. Much of the lecture material is based off the readings for that week. Students are expected to spend several hours with the readings prior to the first lecture for which it is assigned, and after lecture to review the material and complete the reading. Although this is a lecture course, I encourage students to ask questions. If possible, we will have broader class discussions. Acquaintance with the material prior to lecture will facilitate better questions and discussions during class.

I provide several incentives for students to actually complete the reading, despite no discussion section. First, as mentioned above, essays must demonstrate substantial use of the assigned readings to earn better than a C. Second, students who consistently do not attempt to complete the readings forgo the right to use office hours for either myself or for the TA. By contrast, students who engage with the readings and have questions about parts they do not understand are very much encouraged to ask about them in class or office hours.

How to read productively? Don't lose the forest for the trees when reading academic pieces. What is the main argument? What are the main pieces of supporting evidence? Reading notes that summarize the main takeaway points in a few sentences will prove useful for the essays. You may also find it helpful to revise your notes after lecture.

There are no assigned books for the course. All readings are available on the course's Blackboard page.

Submitting assignments and late policy. Students will upload each essay directly to Blackboard by following instructions provided by the TA. W students should email their draft and final paper directly to me (please put your name in the title of the document so they are easy to identify when I download them).

To ensure fairness for all students, we will typically not grant exceptions to deadlines. Each essay is designed to take no more than a few hours to complete. Even if students have an obligation on a weekend that an essay is due, I expect that they can still complete the assignment on Thursday or Friday. If you wish to gain an exception to a deadline, please email me as far in advance as possible. Also remember that *one of the essays doesn't count* (or simply doesn't need to be completed), with the intention of reducing the stress attached to any particular essay.

The late policy is that assignments handed in between 1 and 24 hours late will receive a full grade off, assignments handed in between 24 and 48 hours late will receive two full grades off, and assignments handed in more than 48 hours late will not be accepted.

Academic honesty. Tempted to cheat? Don't do it. Fortunately, there are few possible opportunities for cheating in this course. Students are encouraged to communicate to each other about the readings outside of class, and are encouraged to use their notes when writing the essays. The only exception is that students are NOT ALLOWED to discuss their answers to essay questions with each other or with anyone else prior to handing them in. If I learn that students collaborated or otherwise received help on an essay, then they will receive no credit for that essay and there may be further repercussions. The university's academic honesty policy can be found at: <http://www.rochester.edu/college/honesty>.

Academic disabilities. If you have a disability for which you may request an academic accommodation, you are encouraged to contact me and the access coordinator for your school to establish eligibility for academic accommodations (please see <https://www.rochester.edu/disability/students.html>).

If any of these policies are unclear or if there are other relevant details for your situation, please contact us sooner rather than later. I hope that this course will be an enjoyable and intellectually engaging and experience for everyone.

Summary of due dates

- September 9–12: Essay 1 released and due
- September 30–October 3: Essay 2 released and due
- October 21–24: Essay 3 released and due
- November 4: Draft of W paper due (W students only)
- November 11–14: Essay 4 released and due
- December 7: Final W paper due (W students only)
- December TBD: Essays 5 and 6 during university-scheduled final exam bloc

Schedule of classes

August 26. Overview

- Please read the syllabus before class
- Guriev, Sergei and Daniel Treisman. 2019. “Informational Autocrats.” *Journal of Economic Perspectives*.

I. Historical dictatorships

August 31 and September 2. Bureaucracy

- Stasavage, David. 2020. *The Decline and Rise of Democracy*. Ch. 1 (only pgs. 3-16) and chs. 4-7.

September 7 and 9. Parliamentary constraints on the executive

- Van Zanden et al. 2012. “The Rise and Decline of European Parliaments, 1188–1789.” *Economic History Review*. Read only pgs. 835–852.
- Dincecco, Mark. 2017. *State Capacity and Economic Development: Past and Present*. We will focus mainly on Sections 3 and 4, but skimming the first two sections will provide useful context for his overall argument.

Essay 1 released after class on September 9. Due by midnight on Sunday, September 12.

September 14 and 16. Militaries and political rights throughout history

- Finer, Samuel E. 1997. *The History of Government*. Pgs. 15-23, 59-62, 728-37.
- Andreski, Stanislaw. 1968. *Military Organization and Society*. Pgs. 28-46, 58-9, 67-74.
- Porter, Bruce. 1994. *War and the Rise of the State: The Military Foundations of Modern Politics*. Ch. 5 (only pgs. 170-79).

II. Coercion in contemporary dictatorships

September 21 and 23. Coercive threats and power sharing

- Meng, Anne. 2020. *Constraining Dictatorship: From Personalized Rule to Institutionalized Regimes*. Ch. 1 (skip the last three subsections) and Ch. 3.
- Roessler, Philip. 2010. “The Enemy Within: Personal Rule, Coups, and Civil War in Africa.” *World Politics*. Read only pgs. 300-21.
- Paine, Jack. 2019. “Ethnic Conflict in Africa: The Destructive Legacies of Pre-colonial States.” *International Organization*. Skip the technical details.

Essay 2 released after class on September 30. Due by midnight on Sunday, October 3.

September 28 and 30; October 5 and 7. Repression and the guardianship dilemma

Note: in class, we're going to cover these readings in the order listed, so we probably won't cover the last two until the second week.

- Svolik, Milan W. 2012. *Politics of Authoritarian Rule*. Ch. 5 (read only pgs. 123-33).
- Paine, Jack. 2021. "Reframing the Guardianship Dilemma: How the Military's Dual Disloyalty Options Imperil Dictators." Read only the introduction and Sections 1, 5, and 6.
- Harkness, Kristen A. 2018. *When Soldiers Rebel: Ethnic Armies and Political Instability in Africa*. Ch. 1 (read only pgs. 22-44) and Ch. 3.
- De Bruin, Erica. 2020. *How to Prevent Coups d'Etat*. Introduction and Ch. 1.
- Corrales, Javier. 2020. "Authoritarian Survival. Why Maduro Hasn't Fallen." *Journal of Democracy*. See also <https://www.vox.com/world/2017/9/19/16189742/venezuela-maduro-dictator-chavez-collapse>.

October 12 and 14. No class, fall break (official and unofficial)

III. Institutions

October 19 and 21. Parties

- Gandhi, Jennifer. 2008. *Political Institutions Under Dictatorship*. Pgs. 34-41.
- Miller, Michael K. 2020. "The Autocratic Ruling Parties Dataset: Origins, Durability, and Death." *Journal of Conflict Resolution*.
- Levitsky, Steven and Lucan Way. 2013. "The Durability of Revolutionary Regimes." *Journal of Democracy*.
- Meng, Anne and Jack Paine. 2020. "Rebel Regimes and Military Powersharing: Consequences of Conflict for Authoritarian Durability." Skip the technical details.

Essay 3 released after class on October 21. Due by midnight on Sunday, October 24.

October 26 and 28. Elections

- Levitsky, Steven and Lucan A. Way. 2010. *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War*. Chapter 1, Former Soviet Union (only pgs. 183-213), Africa (only pgs. 236-265).
- Way, Lucan. 2020. "Belarus Uprising: How a Dictator Became Vulnerable." *Journal of Democracy*.

November 2 and 4. Succession

- Kokkonen, Andrej and Ders Sundall. 2014. “Delivering Stability—Primogeniture and Autocratic Survival in European Monarchies 1000–1800.” *American Political Science Review*. Read only pgs. 438-43 and the conclusion.
- Meng, Anne. 2021. “Winning the Game of Thrones: Leadership Succession in Modern Autocracies.” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*. Read only pgs. 950-69 and the conclusion.
- Versteeg, Mila et al. 2020. “The Law and Politics of Presidential Term Limit Evasion.” *Columbia Law Review*. Read only pgs. 1-45.
- Two short articles on China:
 - Nathan, Andrew J. 2003. “Authoritarian Resilience: China’s Changing of the Guard.” *Journal of Democracy*. Read only pgs. 6-9.
 - Shirk, Susan L. 2018. “China in Xi’s “New Era”: The Return to Personalistic Rule.” *Journal of Democracy*.

First draft of W paper due before class (11am) on November 4.

November 9 and 11. Modernization

Acemoglu, Daron and James Robinson. 2012. *Why Nations Fail*. Chs. 3, 5, 12, and 13.

Essay 4 released after class on November 11. Due by midnight on Sunday, November 14.

IV. 21st century dictatorships

November 16 and 18. Controlling the Internet

- King, Gary, Jennifer Pan, and Margaret E. Roberts. 2013. “How Censorship in China Allows Government Criticism but Silences Collective Expression.” *American Political Science Review*.
- Roberts, Margaret. 2018. *Censored: Distraction and Diversion Inside China's Great Firewall*. Pgs. 1-17.
- Andersen, Ross. 2020. “The Panopticon Is Already Here.” *The Atlantic*.
- Pan, Jennifer and Alexandra A. Siegel. 2020. How Saudi Crackdowns Fail to Silence Online Dissent. *American Political Science Review*.

November 23 and 25 – No class, Thanksgiving

Final W paper due before class (11am) on December 7.

November 30, December 2 and 7. Incumbent consolidation and democratic breakdown

- V-Dem Democracy Report 2021. https://www.v-dem.net/media/filer_public/74/8c/748c68ad-f224-4cd7-87f9-8794add5c60f/dr_2021_updated.pdf. Read only pgs. 1-29.
- Levitsky, Steven and Lucan Way. 2020. “The New Competitive Authoritarianism.” *Journal of Democracy*.
- Svolik, Milan. 2020. “When Polarization Trumps Civic Virtue: Partisan Conflict and the Subversion of Democracy by Incumbents.” *Quarterly Journal of Political Science*. Read only the introduction and conclusion.
- Varol, Ozan. 2015. “Stealth Authoritarianism.” *Iowa Law Review*. Read only pgs. 1673–1710.
- Pirro, Andrea and Ben Stanley. 2021. “Forging, Bending, and Breaking: Enacting the ‘Illiberal Playbook’ in Hungary and Poland.” *Perspectives on Politics*.

December TBD: Essays 5 and 6 during university-scheduled final exam bloc.

Assignment for W students

W students will read two recent political science books on authoritarian politics (or nascent democracies) and write a paper that critically engages with the books. I will email a list of suggested books to students. You are not required to select a book from this list, but you must get my approval before choosing your two books—even if both are from the suggested list. I highly recommend checking out books from the library first and reading a few pages to verify that you would actually want to write about that book. One stipulation is that there cannot be any overlap in the books chosen by the students.

The paper should begin with summaries of the two books that, for each, presents their motivating question, main thesis, and forms of evidence presented (no more than 2 pages for each book). Then, for each book, discuss at least one aspect of the argument or evidence you found particularly convincing, and at least one element you found particularly unconvincing. Also put the authors of the two books in dialogue with each other. Do any elements of the argument or evidence from either book either complement or contradict the other? Which one do you find more convincing? Are there any important questions that neither book answers? During this discussion, make sure to connect your discussion of the book to material from the class to the extent possible. For concreteness, you must include references to at least three things from the class (either readings, or lecture material that does not correspond to a particular reading), although for some essays, it will be natural to include more.

A draft of the paper is due November 4. I will provide detailed feedback on this draft, but only on this draft (although I am happy to talk about the papers in office hours; in fact this is highly encouraged). The more effort you put into the draft, the better feedback I can provide, which you can then incorporate into the final paper. The final paper is due December 7 and is 12-15 pages.